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The former head of the CIA maintains that the verification process involves politics *and the public* as much as it does the intelligence services

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Verifying SALT

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SALT II looms as the subject of our next great national debate. The SALT sellers and the SALT shakers have already outlined their campaign plans. And it is plain even now that a major element of the debate will be the verification process. As the intensity of the debate grows, so too does the likelihood of confusion for a public assailed by cries of alarm on one side and smooth assurances on the other, both proffering platoons of experts, dazzling data, and prognostications of doom if their views are not accepted.

Before dashing headlong into the data about strategic systems, however, one must understand the broad principles of verification and the procedures to achieve it. Without such a basis, the debate turns on bewildering detail, out of which, in desperation, a few examples are taken as archetypes—and broad decisions are then taken upon their fortuitous selection. When fundamentals are generally accepted, however, debate over their application can become rational and balanced.

The first and most obvious fundamental is, of course, that we should not "trust" the Russians. This is even enshrined in law in the amendment to the Arms Control and Disarmament Act of 1977, requiring that "adequate verification" accompany any arms control agreements. (The House initially went further, demanding "effective" verification, but the Senate changed this to the less ambiguous word "adequate.") This resolve not to "trust" eliminates a whole rather fruitless area of argument about whether we should accept risks in a SALT agreement in order to advance the process of "détente"—whatever that means to a speaker. The good feeling expressed in toasts about détente is simply irrelevant to the standard of "adequate verification."

But what does the word "adequate" require to satisfy the 1977 amendment and to enable us to conclude a responsible SALT agreement? The SALT negotiating process, of course, involves three phases. The first is the negotiation within the U.S. Government to find a posi-

tion sufficiently satisfying to all the disparate bureaucratic and political factions that it will not be sabotaged before it is even presented, through footdragging, through leaks, or even through insubordination. The second phase involves negotiation with the Russians themselves, which requires our negotiators to state clearly what obligations have been assumed. We have had too many "verifications" of alleged violations of provisions the Soviets never accepted, whatever our "unilateral understanding" may have been about them. The third phase involves negotiation by the administration with that separate sovereignty, the United States Senate, for ratification. This is probably the most important—and possibly the most difficult—phase, for the reservations expressed to the agreement could give a false sense of security or lead to rejection by the Soviet Government.)

In a city so full of lawyers, questions in Washington frequently become legal ones, and the question of adequacy can easily be translated into whether any violation of the agreement—however minute—can be identified. But we must remember that we are dealing with a political document, an agreement between sovereigns, and that there is no impartial judge with jurisdiction over both parties.

In this situation the second fundamental of the verification process arises: Its purpose is to protect us, not to win legal points. The true standard, then, is whether we can verify the agreement adequately to protect ourselves, a different question from whether we can detect every single action by the other side that might constitute less than the most precise compliance with the terms of an agreement. Of course it involves the question of whether the Soviets could, through wily deception or careful concealment, secretly develop and deploy a weapons system they could unveil in such a stunning action—or even a stunning gesture—that we and our allies would be shocked into the realization that we were helpless before them. But short of such feats there are lesser steps the USSR could take to reveal an equally

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